

Economic Conditions of Odissi Music Practitioners: A Primary Study

Subhalaxmi Routray

Guest Lecturer in Economics

Utkal Sangeet Mahavidyalaya, Bhubaneswar

Abstract—Odissi music, recognized as one of India's classical music traditions, carries significant cultural and spiritual importance. Nevertheless, the financial situation of its practitioners is precarious. This paper offers a primary investigation into the economic conditions of Odissi musicians in Odisha. By utilizing data gathered from 50 musicians through questionnaires and personal interviews, the study examines income levels, livelihood sources, fluctuations in earnings over time, and the effects of recorded and digital music. The results indicate patterns of low and inconsistent income, a strong reliance on live performances and teaching, and minimal financial gains from digital platforms. The study underscores the necessity for supportive cultural policies and sustainable income opportunities for Odissi musicians.

Keywords — Odissi Music, Cultural Economics, Performing Artists, Primary Study, Income Pattern.

I. INTRODUCTION

Odissi music², a classical tradition originating in the eastern Indian state of Odisha, is distinguished by its unique ragas, talas, and lyrical styles, setting it apart from Hindustani and Carnatic systems. Revered as one of Odisha's most esteemed musical traditions, it embodies the essence of Odia literature, culture, and ritualistic practices and is traditionally considered the favored music of Lord Jagannatha, with the Divine said to rest and awaken to its enchanting melodies. Despite its profound artistic and spiritual significance, Odissi music faces challenges in

establishing a distinct identity within the modern cultural landscape. Inadequate promotion, limited institutional support, and the pressures of modernization have transformed its traditional framework and threatened its survival. Moreover, contemporary Odissi musicians frequently encounter economic uncertainty due to irregular performance opportunities, the absence of organized markets, and restricted monetization through digital platforms. These challenges have adversely affected their livelihoods, underscoring the urgent need to examine the economic conditions and sustainability of Odissi music practitioners in today's world.

II. OBJECTIVES

1. To examine the major sources of income of Odissi Musicians.
2. To analyse their Monthly Income levels
3. To suggest policy measures for improving the economic conditions of Odissi Music Practitioner.

III. METHODOLOGY

The research relies on primary data obtained from 50 Odissi musicians through simple random sampling. Information was collected via structured questionnaires and personal interviews. The gathered data was analyzed using tables, pie charts, and bar diagrams to illustrate income distribution, sources of income.

An Analysis of Income Sources of Odissi Musicians
Analyzing the primary income sources of Odissi musicians is crucial for comprehending their financial situation. While Odissi music possesses significant cultural importance, its artists rely on diverse income streams including live performances, teaching, government initiatives, and minimal digital revenue. Investigating these sources aids in

¹ Odissi Music—Odissi music embodies a classical musical heritage that originates from Odisha, deeply connected with temple rituals, poetry, and expressive melodic structures.

² Odissi music is a classical music tradition of Odisha, closely linked with temple rituals, devotional poetry, and raga-tala systems.

Mohapatra, B. (2010). *Odissi Music: Tradition and Evolution*. Bhubaneswar: Odisha Sangeet Natak Akademi.

evaluating income stability and the sustainability of livelihoods for Odissi musicians.

The data will be systematically analysed using table and bar – diagram to present the findings in a clear and visually effective manner.

Table 1

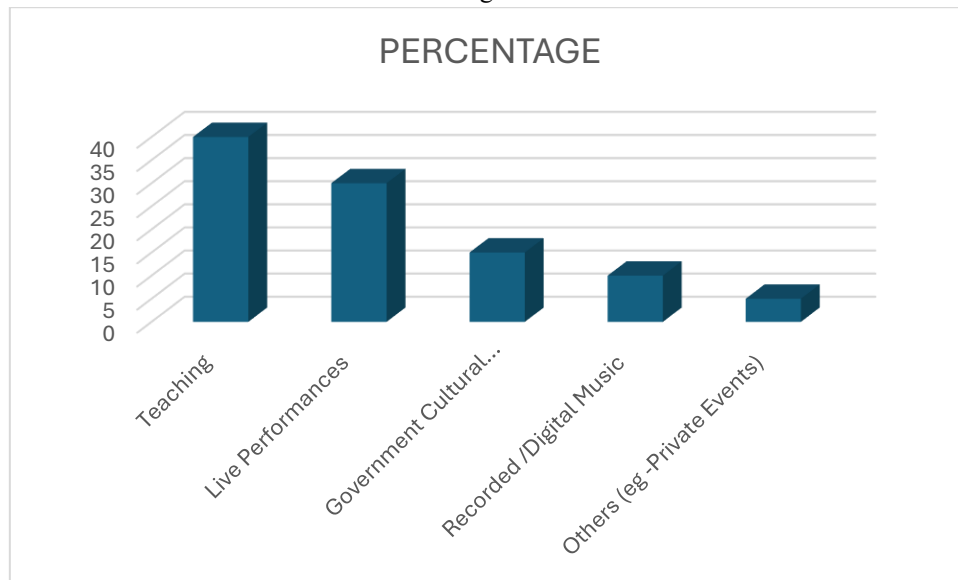
SOURCE OF INCOME	PERCENTAGE
Teaching	40
Live Performances	30
Government Cultural Programmes	15
Recorded /Digital Music	10

Others	5
--------	---

(Source- Primary Data)

Teaching serves as the primary source of income for Odissi musicians, accounting for 40%, followed by live performances at 30%. Government-funded cultural programs contribute 15% to their earnings, whereas recorded or digital music represents a mere 10%. This distinctly underscores the restricted impact of digital platforms in providing financial stability for Odissi musicians.

Fig -1



(Interpretive Assessment)

Teaching – 40%

Teaching constitutes the primary income source for most Odissi musicians. It includes earnings from private lessons, music schools, workshops, and classes provided by academies. This indicates that a considerable number of musicians depend on teaching as a more stable and reliable income source to sustain their livelihoods.

Live Performances – 30%

Live performances account for the second largest income source. This category comprises temple events, cultural festivals, private concerts, and dance accompaniment. Although performances are essential, the lower percentage compared to teaching reflects the irregular nature of performance opportunities.

Government Cultural Programs – 15%

Cultural events, festivals, and initiatives funded by the government contribute moderately to musicians' income. While these programs offer recognition and support, their sporadic nature limits their effectiveness in providing financial stability.

Recorded/Digital Music – 10%

A small portion of income is derived from recorded and digital music, including streaming services and online releases. This highlights the limited financial returns from digital media for Odissi musicians, with many receiving minimal or negligible royalty income.

Others – 5%

This category includes earnings from private events, roles as accompanists in dance performances, small gigs, and various other activities. These earnings are generally irregular and function as supplementary income.

A Study of the Monthly Income of Odissi Musicians
Examining the monthly income levels of Odissi musicians is crucial for comprehending their economic circumstances and livelihood security. Despite the significant cultural and artistic value of Odissi music, its practitioners frequently encounter financial instability stemming from inconsistent performance opportunities and restricted income sources. Analyzing the distribution of monthly income aids in evaluating income inequality, pinpointing vulnerable income groups, and gaining insight into the overall economic condition of Odissi musicians.

Table 2

Monthly Income	Number of Musicians	Percentage
Below 10,000	18	36
10,000-20,000	15	30
20,000	10	20
Above 30,000	7	14
Total	50	100

Source-Primary data

Monthly Income Trends:

The Table -2 , indicates that a significant number of Odissi musicians receive less than ₹20,000 monthly. Among 50 participants, 18 musicians earn under ₹10,000, whereas 15 earn between ₹10,000 and ₹20,000. This reflects a lack of income stability and financial insecurity for the majority of practitioners.

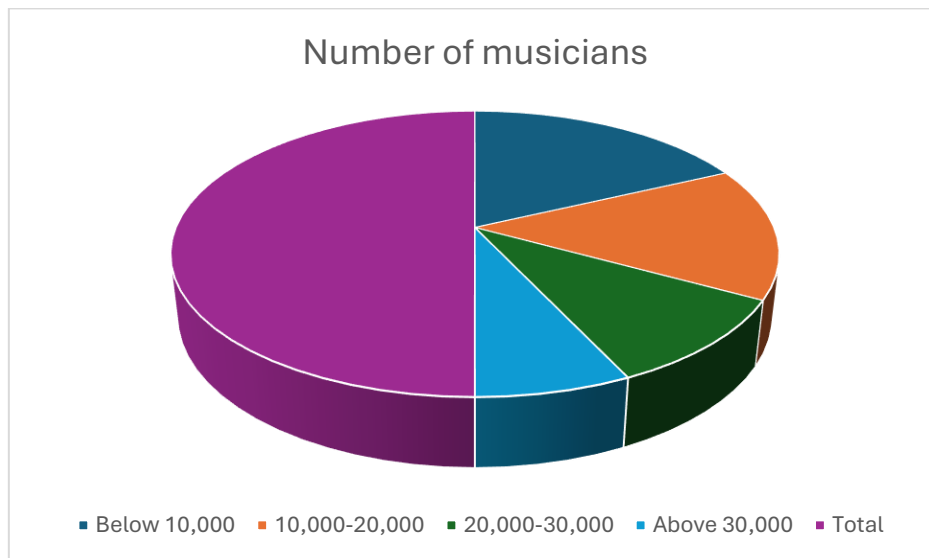


Fig -2

Pie Chart Interpretative Analysis (with Percentages)

The pie chart illustrating the monthly income levels of Odissi musicians reveals a significant concentration within the lower income brackets. Musicians earning less than ₹10,000 per month represent 36% of the total, making up the largest segment of the chart. Those with earnings between ₹10,000 and ₹20,000 account for 30%, suggesting that a considerable number of practitioners receive modest incomes. Collectively, these two categories comprise 66% of the total, emphasizing the prevalent income insecurity among Odissi musicians.

Musicians earning between ₹20,000 and ₹30,000 constitute 20%, indicating a moderate income group with relatively better earnings. Merely 14% of

musicians earn above ₹30,000 per month, representing the smallest segment of the pie chart. This clearly indicates that high-income opportunities are scarce. In summary, the pie chart visually illustrates that the majority of Odissi musicians earn low monthly incomes, highlighting the economic difficulties encountered by practitioners of this classical art form.

Policy Initiatives for the Economic Advancement of Odissi Music Practitioners

To propose policy initiatives aimed at enhancing the economic circumstances of practitioners of Odissi music.

- To advocate for increased governmental backing through consistent and adequately compensated cultural programs, festivals, and performances.
- To recommend the implementation of fixed honorariums or minimum wage standards for Odissi musicians.
- To suggest the introduction of pension plans, health insurance, and welfare programs for senior and full-time practitioners of Odissi music.
- To advocate for financial support, scholarships, and grants dedicated to music education, research, and performances.
- To propose policies that encourage digital monetization, which includes support for recordings, online concerts, and streaming services.
- To recommend the establishment of copyright awareness initiatives and effective royalty distribution systems to safeguard musicians' income.
- To propose the creation of institutional platforms and organized markets to guarantee consistent performance opportunities.

IV. CONCLUSION

This primary study emphasizes that although Odissi music possesses significant cultural, artistic, and spiritual value, its practitioners are confronted with substantial economic difficulties. The results indicate low and inconsistent income levels, a heavy reliance on teaching and live performances, insufficient backing from institutional and governmental initiatives, and minimal financial returns from digital and recorded music. These circumstances jeopardize not only the livelihoods of Odissi musicians but also the viability of this classical art form. Consequently, there is an urgent requirement for comprehensive policy measures, which should include structured income opportunities, increased government support, welfare initiatives, and effective strategies for digital monetization. Fortifying the economic base of Odissi music practitioners is crucial for the preservation and promotion of this rich cultural heritage for future generations.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- [1] Dash, D. P. (2015). *Odissi Music: A Study of Its Evolution and Structure*. Bhubaneswar: Odisha Sangeet Natak Akademi.
- [2] Government of Odisha. (2021). *Cultural Policy and Promotion of Performing Arts*. Bhubaneswar: Department of Culture, Government of Odisha.
- [3] Interviews and questionnaires conducted with Odissi music practitioners during the primary field survey (2025).
- [4] Mohanty, P. K. (2018). "Classical Music Traditions of Odisha: Continuity and Change." *Journal of Cultural Studies*, 12(2), 45–58.
- [5] Mohapatra, B. (2010). *Tradition and Transformation of Odissi Music*. New Delhi: Sangeet Natak Akademi.
- [6] Sangeet Natak Akademi. (2020). *Classical Music Traditions of India*. New Delhi: Government of India.
- [7] Throsby, D. (2001). *Economics and Culture*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- [8] Towse, R. (2010). *A Textbook of Cultural Economics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- [9] UNESCO. (2018). *Culture for Sustainable Development*. Paris: UNESCO Publishing.